

WELCOME TO THE LOWER SCHOOL

PK Orientation



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

ESSENTIALS OVERVIEW

of Policies & Procedures

**8 AM
TO
3 PM**

School Hours for Lower School

Lower School students, grades PK – 2nd, begin class promptly at 8:00 AM. PK students arrive at and are dismissed from the Alderson circle. Please aim to arrive by 7:50 AM as that is when the students are brought to their classrooms.

Early Dismissal

On early dismissal days, all students are dismissed at 11:45 AM. Lunch is not served on these days. Extended day is provided on most of these days.

Parking

If you are parking and walking up in the morning, please do not park on St. Moritz or in the Tom Thumb shopping center parking lot as you will be towed. Parking for drop-off and pick-up is in the Luby's parking lot only.



Extended Day Service

St. Thomas offers an extended day service from dismissal until 6:00 PM. There is an extra charge for this service. For inquiries about this service, please contact the director, Sandy Cole: scole@staschool.org. Extended day is only available for students who are registered for the service and is not available as a drop-in service.

Tardies/Absences

If your child arrives after 8:00 AM, please sign him or her in at the reception desk so that your child may be admitted to class. If your child will be absent, please notify the school by using the quicklink absence form on the website, call the school office at 469-341-0911, or send an e-mail to your child's teacher AND Cheryl Neeley (cneeley@staschool.org). We worry about them when they're not here! If you need to pick up your child early for an appointment, please come no later than 2:40 PM and sign your child out at the reception desk. Coming later than 2:40 PM disrupts the dismissal process since the teachers are concluding the day and readying their students to go home.



Uniforms and Shoes

PK students have a modified uniform consisting of a white collared shirt or the STA red or navy monogrammed knit shirt, with any navy slacks or shorts. Girls may also wear the STA jumper or skort. Uniforms may be purchased from Risse Brothers. Children should wear solid-colored tennis shoes with Velcro closures. Girls may also wear Mary Jane style shoes with Velcro closures. Please – no light-up shoes! Guidelines are on the website.



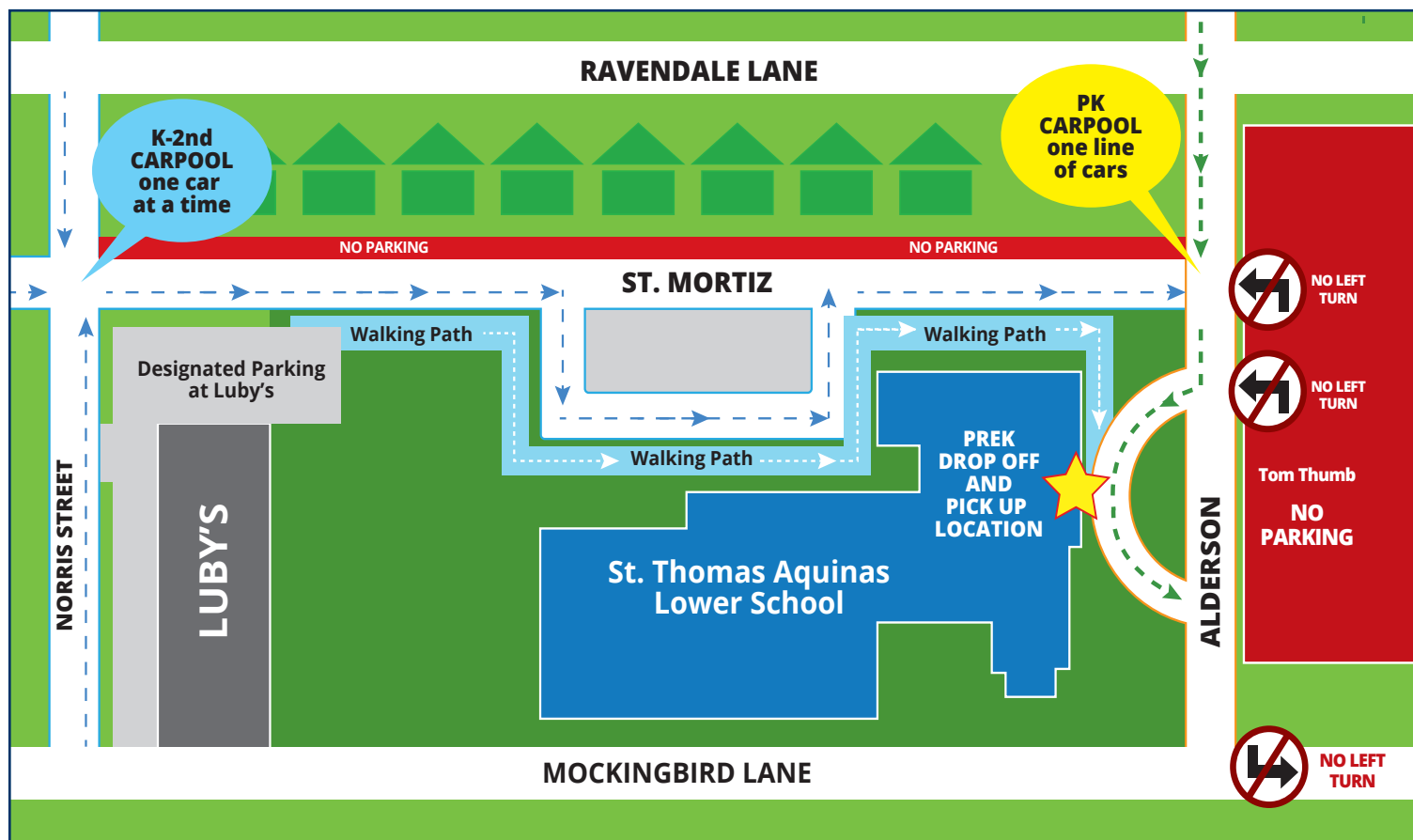
Cafeteria/Recess

Students have approximately 30 minutes for lunch following a 30 minute recess, beginning at 10:30 AM. There is often an additional recess during the day for PK children. Faculty and parent volunteers are welcome and needed! A Parents' Association representative is responsible for coordinating cafeteria/recess volunteers.

Lunch may be purchased in the cafeteria or brought from home. A link to the menu is on the website and in the weekly e-newsletter. Milk or water is included with purchased lunch or may be purchased separately. A prepaid account is required with Guess Who's Coming to Dinner from which all purchases will be deducted. Instructions are on the parent portal of the website. Believe it or not, they do not accept cash during lunch.

We also have microwaves available for warming food for 1 minute or less. With many children in the cafeteria and a substantial line of children waiting for food to be warmed, there is not time to heat up food items that require longer cooking times. Please be sure that food is sent in a microwavable container and that you send necessary utensils and condiments.





CARPOOL DROP-OFF

The guidelines for carpool drop-off/pickup are in place for the safety of the children, so please read and follow all parking and carpool line rules. The carpool line begins at the circular drive on Alderson at the Lower School's east entrance. Thank you for not talking or texting on cell phones during carpool! If you have a K-2 child and a PK child, drop off the K-2 child at the main entrance first, then the PK child at the Alderson entrance.

Beginning at 7:30 AM form a single line on Alderson. Please stay in the queue and do not attempt to pass other vehicles. An adult will assist the children exiting the cars and help them into the building.

Children may not be dropped off prior to 7:15 AM. If your child arrives between 7:15 AM and 7:30 AM: you must drop-off your child at the main entrance to the school on St. Moritz and walk your child to the lobby where there is supervision. These children will be escorted to their PK classes at 7:30 AM by a staff member.

CARPOOL PICKUP

The procedure for the afternoon carpool line is basically the same as for morning carpool. Please pull all the way forward. You will be given a carpool tag at the Back to School Mass and Open House, which should be displayed every day during pick up. The children remain safely in the school supervised by faculty and staff; parents are asked to please remain outside. The students' names are called and they are released to you. Your child will not be released to anyone without the carpool tag or without showing an ID.

K, 1, or 2 siblings are dismissed with their PK siblings from the circular drive on Alderson; you will not need to enter the main parking lot at all. (What a bonus!) You will follow PK4 carpool procedures.

If there is a change in your carpool arrangements, please e-mail the teacher AND Cheryl Neeley (cneeley@staschool.org). We will not release a child to anyone without your express permission.

Guidance

St. Thomas Aquinas Lower School is privileged to have a full time counselor on staff, Padmini Dayal. Padmini has extensive experience working with children and families as a DISD counselor prior to joining the STA staff. She meets with classes as needed, and reinforces the life skills and lifelong guidelines we teach. She will work as a liaison with parents and teachers to help ensure that we are doing everything possible to meet the needs of our students. If you have questions or concerns, Padmini can be reached by calling the Lower School or by e-mail: pdalay@staschool.org.

Enrichment Classes

PK students attend enrichment classes, (we refer to them as "specials") each week, including PE, computer, drama/music, Spanish, library and art.



Snacks

Each student is responsible for bringing class snacks one or two weeks during the year. Snacks can be bought in bulk, homemade, or purchased fresh at the grocery store.

We are sincere and serious in our request that you please send only nutritious snacks!

Room Parents will provide you with a monthly snack schedule. During your scheduled week you are requested to provide enough healthy snacks for every child in the class. PK shares common space when they eat snacks, and we have students with severe nut allergies; therefore we ask that PK snacks always be nut-free.

Please notify teachers immediately if your child has any food allergies.

Snack Suggestions:

- **cheese & whole grain crackers**
- **apples, bananas or other fruit (Wash and cut all fruit, but please don't cut apples and bananas because they will turn brown.)**
- **yogurt (GoGurts can be frozen and the kids love it.)**
- **healthy granola bars**
- **carrots and ranch dressing**

Rest/nap time

PK students have a nap/rest time in order to rejuvenate their bodies for their afternoon activities. Students are asked to have an all-in-one roll-up mat-blanket-pillow combo with Velcro or snap style closures. Feel free to purchase from any vendor you choose. Dimensions must not exceed 50" x 20" x 2".



Personal Belongings

Please be sure to label all personal items with your child's complete name. This includes lunch boxes, jackets, sweatshirts and backpacks. Labeling with first names or initials can often be confusing and results in items being sent to the lost and found.

Communication

E-mail is the primary form of communication from the school to you, so an accurate email address is very important. Teachers also provide you with information directly to keep you informed of upcoming activities in your child's class. Please also be sure that we always have accurate phone numbers for you so that we can reach you quickly, if needed. The school uses the Parent Alert emergency contact system to notify families about urgent matters such as school closing, cancellation of important events, etc. Each week, you will receive the school's Week at a Glance (WAAG), our weekly e-newsletter as well as an email from your homeroom parent.

Teachers check e-mail daily. You are always encouraged to contact your child's teacher with any questions or concerns. Feel free to leave a message for your child's teacher at any time by calling 469-341-0911. You will be able to leave a message with Mrs. Neeley, the receptionist, or on voicemail, if you are calling outside of school hours. E-mail is no substitute for a good conversation!

Face Time

Need a little face time with the Principal? Lauren Roberts will leave Tuesday mornings from 8 AM – 9 AM open for pop-ins. These will be open meetings. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions that you would like to discuss privately, just schedule a time with Ann Kubes and Lauren would be happy to meet with you.

Safe Environment/Volunteering

In compliance with our Diocese, STA has a comprehensive Safe Environment Plan in place for our volunteers. Our Parents' Association is very active and supportive of the school and provides additional funds for the school through its various fundraising activities. St. Thomas Aquinas requires volunteerism of each parishioner family; there are many other opportunities to help in the school. In order to do so you will be required to submit a Safe Environment packet and complete an interview with personnel in the Safe Environment office at the Church. You will attend a brief safety training session scheduled through the stthomasaquinas.org web site, and you will be issued a badge, which must be worn on school premises at all times. Please know that for the safety of our students this policy is strictly enforced.

Any time you come to the school, please wear your badge and sign in at the reception desk. We ask that you do not disrupt the teaching/learning process by entering the classrooms or engaging the teachers in conversation without making prior arrangements with the teacher as their primary focus is on the children.

Philosophy of Preschool Curriculum *Diocese of Dallas Catholic Schools*

Early childhood education is an integral part of Catholic education that guides growth and development through an age-appropriate curriculum, methodology and materials based on reliable research. It focuses on religious formation of the young child through the introduction and practice of Christian virtues, prayer and sharing.

It provides a nurturing, experientially-oriented environment which fosters peace-making and an awareness of the presence of God. Through this awareness, early childhood education promotes a love of God, family, self and others.

Curriculum Objectives

As with all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Dallas, St. Thomas Aquinas School follows the curriculum objectives set forth by Catholic Schools Office. Each child will progress developmentally at a pace determined by the child's individual needs. The child will be encouraged to explore, discover, experiment, create, and problem solve. Through play, the young child will develop readiness skills (social/emotional, visual language, and motor skills) and a joy of learning.

Children will experience developmental skills and concepts as they participate in integrated activities, use manipulatives and interact with others in content areas and literature-based classroom experiences. Additionally, the child will recognize and respect cultural diversity through appropriate experiential activities.

The curriculum standards correlate with the Texas Education Agency Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, as well as current research in the field of early childhood.

Our Most Important Plea

New school year jitters are normal. Our students typically adapt quickly to the new routine and do well socially, making new friends easily. This is not true, however, for every child as they are all so unique. Please do not take a "wait and see" approach if your child is complaining that he or she does not want to come to school. You know your child better than anyone. Please let us know if: your child's adjustment is not showing improvement, your child regularly complains about stomach aches in the mornings before school, or your child shows other signs of stress related to school. There is a LOT we can do to help, so please think of us as your partners. We want them to love coming to school!

We look forward to meeting your angels! Thank you sincerely for entrusting them to our care.



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

LOWER SCHOOL CAMPUS

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